DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 253 TM 019 494

AUTHOR Hamilton, Anne C.
TITLE Performance Assessment of Personal Correspondence on the Development of Written Language Use and Functions in Traditional and Process Writing Second-Grade Classrooms.
PUB DATE Nov 92
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (21st, Knoxville, TN, November 11-13, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Comparative Analysis; *Educational Assessment; *Elementary School Students; Grade 2; *Language Usage; *Letters (Correspondence); Primary Education; Qualitative Research; Skill Development; Teaching Methods; Writing Evaluation; Writing Improvement; *Writing Processes; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Language Functions; Pen Pals; *Performance Based Evaluation

ABSTRACT

The development of written language and its functions were studied for 236 second graders (from four locations in the surrounding Birmingham, Alabama area) in 6 traditional and 6 writing process classrooms. Pen pal letters to undergraduates and written samples were obtained from three students from each class. Writing process classrooms reflect writing experiences that include student-selected topics and choice of genre. Non-linear or recursive writing opportunities are included daily. Quantitative analysis assessed the children's written language development in spontaneous writing. Qualitative methods assessed the following functions of written language: (1) instrumental; (2) regulatory; (3) interpersonal; (4) personal (awareness of self); (5) heuristic; (6) imaginative; and (7) informative. A quasi-experimental design compared effectiveness of pen pal letters as strategies for written language development in the two types of classrooms. Children from the writing process classroom provided more decontextualized topics and appeared to have more ownership and voice. Teachers in writing process classrooms also appeared to have a better knowledge of the developmental process of writing and spelling. Pen pal letters do provide an opportunity for children to use multiple functions of language. Most of the children perceive their writing experiences as positive. Four tables and 1 figure present study data, and 45 references are included. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Performance Assessment of Personal Correspondence on the Development of Written Language Use and Functions in Traditional and Process Writing Second-Grade Classrooms

ED354253

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ANNE C. HAMILTON

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Anne C. Hamilton
University of Montevallo
College of Education

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association.
November 11 - 13, 1992, Knoxville, Tennessee.

TM019494

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade there has been a focus on children's writing. Queries into children's understanding of written language have produced a wealth of research in early childhood on the genesis of writing (Bissex, 1980; Dyson, 1983, 1991; Edelsky & Smith, 1984; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Taylor, 1983). Researchers Graves (1983), Calkins (1983, 1986, 1991), Tchudi & Tchudi (1983), Atwell (1989), and Goodman (1990) have given teachers suggestions on how to provide opportunities for children to construct their own system of written language.

Graves (1983) and Wortman (1989) stated that children need to meet certain criteria before writing. The criteria mentioned included having a reason or purpose to write, being familiar with the genre, and having a need for an audience.

Calkins (1986) believed that second grade can be a time of expansion if children have an audience, are encouraged to focus on content, and have opportunities to re-read and reflect on their texts and subjects. A goal for second graders is to have their writing develop in harmony with their talking.

Children who have difficulty learning to read and write are those to whom the functional potential of language has not been made clear. They have a mismatch in their own expectations of what language is for (Halliday, 1978) and how they can use it. As more and more time is spent on worksheets, workbooks, and tests, the child has less time for reading, writing, and the needed social interaction necessary for developing a system of meaning. The

children often work on skills in isolation, and learning becomes disconnected (Graves, 1985).

A number of teachers have begun to conduct their classrooms in such a way that children are active participants in their language learning. Reading and writing, when viewed as tools to language expression, become more interrelated rather than isolated (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

Emphasis on children's written language is becoming an interest in many classrooms. Workshops at national, state, and local levels aid teachers in strategies for helping children develop their writing abilities. However, there has been little research comparing traditional classrooms with writing process classrooms. In addition, the literature on writing process reveals little research regarding instructional strategies.

Pen pal letters might be a strategy that would facilitate development of written language. The genre of the friendly letter provides the child with Graves' and Wortman's criteria and a natural environment for growth of written expression. The strategy of pen pal letters, in which children correspond with older individuals, allows for original expression, elicits responses, and is a natural life experience. Second graders' pen pal letters should provide the opportunity to write using a variety of functions, thus leading to more advanced and sophisticated types of writing, such as expository, narrative, and poetic modes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the development of written language and its functions through the strategy of personal

correspondence in six traditional and six writing process second grade classrooms. The study involved investigation of second graders' letters to university undergraduates.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the literature for this study focused on the areas of written language and the classroom strategies which are most pertinent to this investigation, and reports literature in four major areas. These include children's written language development, the functions of writing, writing process classrooms, and pen pal letters.

Children's Written Language Development

Researchers have identified several behaviors that serve as children's tools for constructing their knowledge about written language. These tools include oral language, drawing, social interaction and play, and scribbles (Daiute, 1990; Temple, Nathan, Burris, & Temple, 1988). Goodman (1985) identified other constructs that children develop. These include categories, levels, and principles of written language development.

Several authors (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Temple et al., 1988) have reported that children compose before they write by drawing pictures and talking about them. Oral expression and the other tools of childhood provide an opportunity for children to organize their thoughts. Interaction with picture books, as well as opportunities for self-generated drawings, gives young children a sense of how pictures and words go together to tell a story (Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

Children learn about writing by observing skilled others and by participating with them in literary events (Morrow, 1989).

Morrow argued that children's involvement in written language is typically connected to social situations with self-initiated and self-directed interactions. According to Halliday (1978) context plays a part in determining what is said and, conversely, what is said plays a part in determining the context. In Halliday's opinion, these environmental features are not things or processes but are of human interactions from which things derive their meanings.

Research in the field of social cognition has emphasized the young writer's sense of audience and point-of-view (Cowie, 1984). Cowie thought that imaginative story writing might grow out of episodes from an earlier age.

Researchers have found that scribbling is an early form of alphabetic characters, is not random, and represents meaning recorded in a concrete way (Goodman, 1985; Sampson, Allen, and Sampson, 1991). Through "kid watching," Goodman (1985) found that very young children's written language is organized and resembles specific forms found in adult culture.

Functions of Writing

One can examine the functions of writing by focusing on the uses of writing in different societies and by looking at individual writers' purposes for writing. Britton and associates (1975) suggested that within function categories there "is an attempt to provide a framework within which to ask, or answer, the question, Why are you writing?" (p. 74).

Several authors have presented their notions of written language functions. Britton et al. (1975) proposed three major

areas: transactional (to get things done), expressive (personal interests), and poetic (feelings and ideas).

Many researchers believe that the oral language functions developed by children carry over to written language development (Chafel, 1982; Goodman & Goodman, 1983; Halliday, 1975; Pinnell, 1985). Halliday (1975) maintained that seven functions of oral language develop in sequential order by the time a child is 22 months old. The first four are considered ego-centric, and the last three broaden the child's world as he or she becomes aware of the surroundings. According to Halliday (1975), the seven functions are universals of human culture and develop in the following order:

1. Instrumental function ("I want"), which satisfies the child's material needs;

2. Regulatory function ("Do as I tell you"), which involves the child's effort to control the behavior of others;

3. Interpersonal function ("Me and you"), which also refers to the child's personal greetings, such as "Hello" and "Yes;"

4. Personal function ("Here I come"), which refers to the child's awareness of self, and is expressed by personal feelings of participation, withdrawal, interest, pleasure, and/or disgust;

5. Heuristic function ("Tell me why"), where the child seeks and tests knowledge and begins to recognize and understand the boundary between the self and the environment;

6. Imaginative function ("Let's pretend"), where the child is able to create his/her environment, as reflected in the world of songs, rhymes, and stories; and

7. Informative function ("I've got something to say"), when the child begins to communicate information, descriptions, and propositions, which will dominate adult language (Halliday, 1973, p. 11-18).

Milz (1983) studied first graders' functions of written language development for a year. Her findings revealed that writing served varied functions depending on the genre selected by the children. Dyson's (1983) 3-month study with 22 kindergarten children found that young children write differently for different purposes, and that these purposes are not necessarily equivalent to those of adults.

In a recent work, Dyson (1991) reported on early written language development as an aspect of symbol development. She stated that children need diverse functional experiences from their points of view. Children also need to interact with other people who model adult literacy practices.

Writing Process Classrooms

Graves (1985) stated that "understanding writing as communication is the heart of teaching the writing process" (p. 37). Writing process strategies are usually found in a classroom where the teacher supports and exhibits the philosophy of whole language instruction. Writing process classrooms reflect writing experiences which include student-selected topics and choice of genre. Non-linear or recursive writing opportunities are included daily. Children are encouraged to share and discuss ideas, draft, revise, and confer with each other and their teacher. Editing is performed by the child after the process of writing. The sharing

and publication of work is encouraged (Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1983, 1985; Heald-Taylor, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988).

Process writing is child-centered, in that the teacher accepts the responsibility for helping each child grow in every possible way (Goodman, 1989). The teacher in such a classroom is willing to discard such traditional practices as weekly spelling lessons, heavy emphasis on phonics for reading instruction, and/or the parsing of sentences for writing instruction (Edelsky & Smith, 1984; Watson, 1989). The teachers do not see writing as a mechanical sequence, but as a social, linguistic, and psychological system children engage in to do their writing (Edelsky and Smith, 1984).

Pen Pal Letters

Edelsky and Smith (1984) maintained that writing in school is sometimes an imitation, substitute, or unauthentic exercise. They stated that to be engaged in a genuine writing activity, which produces meaningful text, a person must be engaged in four systems -- graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic -- which operate interactively and interdependently.

Goodman and Goodman (1983) suggested that note or letter writing is one type of strategy that most involves a single writer with another. It is "only when language is interpersonal that the writer can build a sense of how completely a message must be represented and how form must support function" (Goodman & Goodman, 1983, p. 596). Pen pal letters allow a closer look at language exchanges through meaningful writing experiences (Burke, 1989). Williams (cited in Burke) believed that when written language becomes meaningful, then written performance improves at all levels.

Several articles and studies have reported findings regarding the genre of pen pal letters. Studies involved children from upper elementary grades, and focused on the mechanics of writing (Ashe, 1987; Crowhurst, 1990; Labercane, 1986). Yellin's (1987) study of 23 second graders, each corresponding with undergraduate college students over a 15-week period, revealed significant results in using the format of a friendly letter. The author also noted that the interchange boosted children's confidence in their writing abilities.

Robinson and collaborators' (1991) book on letter writing included case studies of four children, from 5+ - 7+ years of age. In addition to the finding that the children's letters revealed uses of different functions, it was also discovered that their skills as organizers of written language developed. All of the children demonstrated an understanding of audience.

The use of pen pal letters for second graders should provide an opportunity for meaningful interaction with a different audience. The undergraduate college students should provide a different point of view and an adult model for the children. The letters should provide the children an opportunity to express a variety of written language functions, thus providing a basis for higher level and more demanding modes of writing, such as poetic and transactional.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to assess the development of written language and functions of written language in traditional and process writing second-grade classrooms following 12 exchanges of letters with pen pals. The research design utilized aspects of

both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis was used to assess the children's written language development in spontaneous writing. Analyses of functions of written language and the researcher's foreshadowed inquiries about children's writing were addressed by qualitative methods including nonparticipant observation, inspection of written samples, and interviews (Goetz and LeCompt, 1984). A quasi-experimental design was used to compare the effectiveness of pen pal letters as a strategy for written language development with six traditional and six process writing classrooms.

The selection of 12 intact second-grade classrooms was conducted in five phases: (a) determining the approach of classroom instruction from teacher information and observation; (b) administering the WRAT-R (Jastak et al., 1984) spelling and arithematic suntests to establish initial classroom equality; (c) grouping the selected 12 classes into four homogeneous groups; (d) randomly selecting the treatment and control groups; and (e) conducting the study and randomly selecting three children (S = 18) from each experimental classroom to provide pen pal letters and other written genre for analysis.

The traditional classrooms were identified as those which exhibited writing experiences for the children that were teacher-assigned, skill-oriented, and generally teacher-controlled as to topic and genre. Writing opportunities usually occurred weekly, with evaluation based on spelling and grammar. The teacher typically was the center of attention and stressed correctness.

The writing process classrooms were those which exhibited opportunities for daily writing. The student usually selected the

topic and genre. The strategy of process writing was employed, with components of prewriting, drafting, revising, conferencing, and editing. The sharing and publishing of children's written work was encouraged. Evaluation procedures were based on an interaction of growth and conceptions of composing, using symbol representation, spelling, revising, editing, and publishing.

Quantitative Analysis

The 12 classrooms were grouped into four major homogeneous groups. Treatment groups were randomly selected. Groups were identified as traditional control, traditional pen pal, writing process control, and writing process pen pal. Homogeneity of the groups was established by an analysis of raw scores on the spelling and arithmetic subtests of the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R) (Jastak, Wilkinson, & Jastak, 1984). The independent variables were the two approaches of second-grade classrooms and the exchange of weekly pen pal letters over a 16-week period. The dependent variable was pre- and posttest scores on the Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2) by Hammill and Larsen (1988).

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There will be no differences in the mean scores on the Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2) posttest between traditional and writing process classrooms after employing letter-writing strategies.

2. There will be no difference in the mean scores on the TOWL-2 posttest between traditional and writing process classrooms.

Qualitative Analysis

Concomitant to testing the above mentioned hypotheses, samples of randomly selected children's work were analyzed as to their use

of functions of language according to Halliday's (1975) seven items. Interviews with 12 teachers, classroom observations, and unobtrusive data were collected and used as primary resources. These data were analyzed in accordance with the following foreshadowed questions:

1. Does continued interaction through personal correspondence provide opportunities for second graders' development of multi-functions in written language expression? (Will the genre of friendly letters afford an opportunity for the children to play with and explore functions of language in written form as they do when learning oral language?)

2. Does the ability and facility to express themselves in a variety of functions enhance their written expression in genres other than friendly letters?

3. In what ways are second graders able to express knowledge of social semiotics (including semantics, syntax, and graphaphonics relationships) with an unknown adult audience?

4. Is it possible that adults' correspondence can influence second graders' written language development? If so, in what ways?

5. Is it possible for second graders to evaluate and write about their writing experiences? Can second graders engage in a written form of metalinguistics in which they express notions of classroom experiences, relationships formed, and the forms used for their written work?

In addition to analyzing interviews, observations, and samples of written expression, unobtrusive data were collected. Forms of unobtrusive data included photographs of the classrooms and hallways outside of the room; socio-economic statistics based on

free, reduced, and paying lunches of the children; and attendance records of the classrooms for a period of 6 months (September - February).

Description of the Sample

Six traditional and six writing process classes (N = 250 children), from four locations in the surrounding Birmingham, Alabama area, were placed into four groups of three classes each. Each school contained either the traditional or writing process classes, in order not to contaminate the findings.

The comparison groups initially consisted of 250 second-grade children. There were 128 children in the writing process classrooms and 122 in the traditional classrooms. The total sample included 140 boys and 110 girls with a 2-year age range (7:0 - 9:1). At the conclusion of the study, 236 children remained in the sample. All data were analyzed for this sample.

In addition, three children from each experimental class were randomly selected by their teachers to provide pen pal letters and written samples for analysis. When appropriate, other children's samples were used as a showcase for a concept.

Description of the Instruments

Two instruments were used in the quantitative aspect of the study. The Wide Range Achievement Test-R (WRAT-R) (Jastak et al., 1984) was used to establish initial group equality between the 12 second grade classes and the four groups. The spelling and arithmetic subtests of the WRAT-R were used in this study only to establish a baseline for homogeneity of classrooms and groups.

The Test of Written Language (TOWL-2) (Hammill and Larsen, 1988) was given to assess the second graders' spontaneous written

language. TOWL-2 consists of two alternative forms (A and B). Form A was used as the pretest. Form B was used at the end of 16 weeks as the posttest. Five spontaneous formats (subtests) were used in the pre- and posttest evaluation for this study: Thematic maturity, Contextual vocabulary, Syntactic maturity, Contextual spelling, and Contextual style.

Treatment of the Data

Data collected from pre- and posttest scores of the groups were analyzed by an analysis of covariance. The alpha level of .05 was used as the criterion for statistical significance. The Scheffé procedure of analysis was used to determine individual group significance. The Eta square test for practical significance was calculated.

The qualitative analysis was based on samples of children's pen pal letters and other written work from the six treatment classrooms. These samples were reviewed and assessed according to Halliday's (1975) functions of language development. Three readers established a .91 interrater reliability for coding functions in the letters. In addition, interviews and field notes were obtained, coded, and analyzed in relationship to the five foreshadowed questions.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings Related to Hypothesis 1

A one-way analysis of variance procedure comparing scores on pretest TOWL-2 (Form A) indicated there were no significant differences between the four groups (N = 250) at the time of pretesting. The F-ratio of 1.1786 was not significant at the .05

level, thus the groups were considered to be equivalent in spontaneous written language at the onset of the study.

To test the hypothesis of no significant differences between the groups, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. The covariate was pretest scores. Use of this covariate allowed a better investigation of the effects of the primary independent variables (Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs, 1988), group and approaches. The assumptions for ANCOVA were met.

Results of the ANCOVA for the TOWL-2 (Form B) summary of student standard scores by experimental and control groups are indicated in Table 1. The F ratio of 8.092 (df 1,231) indicated that between group posttest adjusted means was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

The Scheffé multiple comparisons test was used to determine group differences of the adjusted means. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between the traditional control group adjusted mean ($X = 42.4$) and all other groups (see Table 2). Closer inspection of individual TOWL-2 subgroups' adjusted means indicated there were significant differences between groups at the .05 level or above in all subtests except Contextual Vocabulary [F ratio = 1.491 (df 1.3)].

Inspection of the experimental group (112 children in traditional and writing process classes writing to pen pals) and the control group (124 children in traditional and writing process classes not writing to pen pals) adjusted means of the posttest summary standard score did not indicate a significant difference at the .05 level.

Table 1: Summary of Analysis of Covariance for TOWL-2
TOWL-2 Posttest Summary of Standard Scores by Groups

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Covariate	5.573.155	1	5.573.155	61.177
Between	221.431	3	737.144	8.092*
Within	21.043.800	231	91.099	
TOTAL	28.828.386	235	122.674	

*P<.001

Table 2: Adjusted Means TOWL-2 Posttest
Summary of Standard Scores by Group

Groups	N	Adj. x
Writing process experimental	56	48.40
Traditional experimental	56	47.14
Writing process control	63	50.61
Traditional control	61	42.40
Grand mean		47.14

Quantitative Findings Related to Hypothesis 2

Results for the ANCOVA for teaching approach on the TOWL-2 (Form B) posttest summary of standard scores are presented in Table 3. The resulting F-ratio of 15.06 for traditional and writing process classrooms was statistically significant beyond the .001 level of significance.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Covariance for TOWL-2 Posttest Summary of Standard Scores by Approach

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Covariate	5,573.155	1	5,573.155	59.448
Between	1,411.859	1	1,411.859	15.060*
Within	21,843.372	233	93.748	
TOTAL	28,828.386	235	122.674	

*P<.001

The Eta Square test of practical significance was perrormed on the TOWL-2 (Form B). The magnitude of the Eta square statistic procedure was .08 for group adjusted means and .05 for approach adjusted means. Neither approached practical significance.

Qualitative Findings Related to Five Foreshadowed Questions

The following five foreshadowed questions were analyzed by means of non-participant observation, interviews with 12 classroom teachers after data collection, and examination of the children's written samples. Three children were randomly selected by their teachers from each of the experimental classes. The results of Questions 1-4 were based on the writings of these 18 children. All 236 children in the study contributed to the findings for Question 5.

1. Does continued interaction through personal correspondence provide opportunities for second graders' development of multi-functions in written language expression?

Pen pal letters provided an opportunity for children to explore the variety of language functions as defined by Halliday (1975). Not every child employed all functions in his or her

letters over a 16-week period. The function utilized the most was personal (44%), followed by informative (19%), heuristic (17%), interpersonal (14%), regulatory (4.3%), instrumental (0.4%), and imaginative (0.2%).

The children from traditional classes (N = 9) used the personal, heuristic, interpersonal, and instrumental functions more than children in writing process classes. Writing process children used the informative and regulatory functions more than traditional children. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Comparison of Function Usage Between 18 Traditional and Writing Process Children

	The number of times functions were used in:		
Language functions	Traditional classes	Writing process classes	Row total
Instrumental	3	2	5
Regulatory	22	32	54
Interpersonal	110	68	178
Personal	381	248	629
Heuristic	130	83	213
Imaginative	2	1*	3
Informative	73	168	241

Note: The number of times specific functions were used was determined by a content analysis of the pen pal letters written by nine students in traditional classrooms and nine students in writing process classrooms. Observed frequencies are reported.

*Children attached original stories to letters.

The personal function was the most frequently used, and referred to egocentric sentences. The informative function was the second most frequently used, and indicated that children were able to decenter and write of detached events. One process writing child's letter, explaining how to do a simple experiment, is an illustration of the informative function (see Figure 1).

The genre of pen pal letters allowed the children to explore all seven functions of language. Some children used the letter exchange as an opportunity to play with language.

All 18 children used both the heuristic and interpersonal functions. The children often asked demographic questions to learn more about their university friend. In addition, all 18 children used the interpersonal function to establish a "you and me" relationship to some degree.

2. Does the ability and facility to express him- or her-self in a variety of function enhance written expression in genres other than friendly letters?

Children from writing process classrooms generated more original stories, biographies, and informational pieces than did traditional children. Children in traditional classrooms also wrote in genres other than pen pal letters, but did not appear to have the same freedom of expression.

It was observed that children in one traditional class wrote lengthy pen pal letters on a weekly basis. On closer inspection of the letters, all children had written essentially the same thing, except for filling in the appropriate personal information. The teacher had modeled a "form letter" for the children to copy.

January 16, 1982

Dear A ,

Do you like experiments. I dol Do this experiment outside. You will need a class botle, a whine top and venger an ba-kensodo. Messr two cups of verger and put in the botle. Put a hand foll of in the botle. Plump the whine top on fost. Shake and with your thum give it a esey buge. The ltop soots up.

(on back Your R friend,) My additions

Figure 1. Example of the informative function as expository writing

3. In what ways are second graders able to express an underlying knowledge of semiotics with an unknown audience?

Children from writing process classes were able to write to unknown university students employing more decontextualized information than their traditional class counterparts. Grammatical sophistication or syntax was analyzed by computing the average T units (Hunt, 1965) in each letter of the 18 children. The T unit is defined "as a single main clause plus whatever other subordinate clauses or non-clauses are attached to, or embedded within, the main clause" (Hunt, 1977, pp. 92-93).

None of the 18 children showed a steady increase of T units over 16 weeks. All children indicated a fluctuation of T units between exchanges.

All 18 children exhibited the transitional level of spelling. Many features of standard spelling were used (silent letters and short vowels) with their own inventions. A child from a traditional classroom shared his inhibitions to express information due to his insistence on accurate spelling.

4. Is it possible that an adult correspondent can influence a second grader's written language development? If so, in what ways?

Second graders were observed using pen pal letters to assist with correct spelling on some occasions. It was reported that many children could identify university students' errors of syntax (especially homographs and mechanics) and format in friendly letters.

5. Is it possible for second graders to evaluate and write about their experience in writing?

The majority of children across the 12 classrooms wrote that they liked writing and felt positive about it. Several had ambivalent feelings. Those with negative feelings indicated that it made their hand hurt. Children in all classes thought that they wrote a lot and were able to list examples of genre.

The children in the writing process classrooms expressed a high level of confidence and self-esteem about themselves as writers. Children from both approaches stated that writing was fun, helped them to learn, and helped them read.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The null hypothesis that there will be no differences in the mean scores on the TOWL-2 posttest of writing between traditional and writing process groups after employing letter writing strategies was rejected. The null hypothesis that there will be no difference in the mean scores on the TOWL-2 posttest between traditional and writing process approaches was rejected.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicated that pen pal letters provided an opportunity for children to express multi-functions of language. The children who had many and varied opportunities to write in a risk-free environment expressed themselves well in different genre.

Children from writing process rooms provided more decontextualized topics. Syntax according to measure of T units fluctuated between letters for all 18 children. All 18 children exhibited the transitional level of spelling. Influences derived from an adult correspondent occurred primarily with spelling improvement and from recognizing the mistakes of the correspondent.

The writing process children appeared to have more ownership and voice in their letters and other pieces of written work. The children wrote throughout the day, incorporating writing as a tool in all subject areas rather than writing as a subject (i.e., creative writing. As the children wrote in logs, participated in focused writing on selected topics and choice of topics, their writing was essentially impersonal, the last kind of writing acquired (Britton et al., 1979).

The majority of second graders from 12 classrooms perceived their writing experiences as positive. All of the children thought they spent a large amount of time writing in class. The children from writing process classes exhibited voice, a sense of audience, and willingness to take risks with written language.

Teachers of writing process classes appeared to have a better knowledge of the developmental process of writing and spelling. These teachers worked in a non-threatening way to support slower developing children in their efforts, and made them feel included in the group of writers.

In considering the results of this study, recommendations for further research included: (a) replication using a full academic year (9 months) as a treatment period; (b) replication using third graders or another older group; (c) comparing the development of children's use of oral language functions (Halliday, 1975) with their use of written language functions; (d) exploring the qualitative questions of this study with first graders; and (e) conducting a case study of a child's development of written language functions.

Selected References

Ashe, P. (1987). Letters to pen pals at a convalescent center. (Report No. CS 210 298). Louisville, KY: (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 279 010)

Atwell N. (1989). Coming to know. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bissex, G. (1980). Gyns at work: A child learns to write and read. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Britton, J., Burgess, T., Martin, N., McLeod, A., & Rosen, H. (1979). The development of writing abilities (pp. 11-18). London: MacMillan Education, LTD.

Burke, J. (1989). Pen pals: A beneficial partnership. Paper presented at the 39th annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX.

Calkins, L. (1983). Lessons from a child. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Calkins, L. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Calkins, L. (1991). Living between the lines. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Chafel, J. (1982). Making early literacy a natural happening. Childhood Education, 58, 300-304.

Cowie, H. (Ed.) (1984). The development of children's imaginative writing. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Crowhurst, M. (1990). Sixth-graders learn from letter writing. (Report No. CS212 213). British Columbia University, Vancouver. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 315 776)

Daiute, C. D. (1990). The role of play in writing development. Research in the Teaching of English, 24, 4-27.

Dyson, A. H. (1983). The role of oral language in early writing process. Research in the Teaching of English, 17, 1-29.

Dyson, A. H. (1991). Viewpoints: The word and the world reconceptualizing written language development or do rainbows mean a lot to little girls? Research in the Teaching of English, 25, 97-123.

Edelsky, C., & Smith, K. (1984). Is that writing or are those marks a figment of your curriculum? Language Arts, 61, 24-32.

Ferreiro, E., & Teberosky, A. (1982). Literacy before schooling. Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Geotz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research. San Francisco: Academic Press.

Goodman, K. (1989). Whole-language research: Foundations and development. The Elementary School Journal, 90, 207-221.

Goodman, Y. (1985). Developing writing in a literate society. Educational Horizons, 64, 17-38.

Goodman, K., & Goodman, Y. (1983). Reading and writing relationships: Pragmatic functions. Language Arts, 60, 590-599.

Graves, D. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1985). All children can write. Learning Disabilities Focus, 1, 36-43.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1973). Explorations in the functions of language. London: Edward Ainsed.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1975). Learning how to mean: Exploration in the development of language. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Language as social semiotic. Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.

Hammill, D. D., & Larsen, S. C. (1988). Test of written language-2. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Heald-Taylor, G. (1989). Administrator's guide to whole language. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen.

Hinkle, D., Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. (1988). Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Hunt, K. W. (1965). Grammatical structure at three grade levels (Research Rep. No. 3). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Hunt, K. W. (1977). Earlyblooming and late blooming syntactic structures. In C. Cooper, & L. Odell (Eds.), Evaluating writing: describing, measuring, judging (pp. 91-104). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Jastak, S., Wilkinson, G., & Jastak, J. (1984). Wide range achievement test-revised. Wilmington, DE: Jastak Associates, Inc.

Labercane, G. (1986). Responses of prospective language arts teachers to an electronic letter writing project. (Report No. CS 210 436) Canada: Alberta. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 282 209)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Milz, V. (1984). A psycholinguistic description of the development of writing in selected first grade students. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1983). Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 3279A.

Morrow, L. (1989). Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Pinnell, G. (1985). Ways to look at the functions of children's language. In, A. Jagger, & M. Smith-Burke (Eds.) Observing the Language Learner (pp. 52-72). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Reutzel, D. R., & Hollingsworth, P. M. (1988). Whole language and the practitioner. Academic Therapy, 23, 405-416.

Robinson, A., Crawford, L., & Hall, N. (1991). Some day you will no (sic) all about me: Young children's explorations in the world of letters. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sampson, M. R., Allen, R. V., & Sampson, M. B. (1991). Pathways to literacy. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Strickland, D. S., & Morrow, L. M. (1989). Emerging readers and writers: Young children's early writing development. The Reading Teacher, 42, 426-427.

Taylor, D. (1983). Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Tchudi, S. N., & Tchudi, S. J. (1983). Teaching writing in the content areas: Elementary school. National Education Association Publications.

Temple, C., Nathan, R., Burris, N., & Temple, F. (1988). The beginning of writing. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Watson, D. J. (1989). Defining and describing whole language. The Elementary School Journal, 90, 129-141.

Wortman, R. C. (1989). Lecture presented at the Second Annual Whole Language Conference, July, 1989, Birmingham, AL.

Yellin, D. (1987). My pen pal goes to college: A functional approach to literacy learning. (Report No. CS 210 532). Louisville, KY (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 282 236).